

North Chicago VA News



North Chicago
VA Medical Center
3001 Green Bay Road
North Chicago, Illinois 60064

September 2005

VA CELEBRATES 75 YEARS



We commemorate 75 years of service to our Nation's veterans and reaffirm our commitment to them in the decades to come. Our sacred charge as agents for America's citizen-soldiers is one we accept with pride and humility,

bound as we are in stewardship, united in one purpose, and embarked on a great undertaking of advocacy. On July 21, 1930, President Herbert Hoover sat at his desk to sign Executive Order 5398, which brought together the United States Veterans Bureau, the Bureau of Pensions, and the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers into a brand-new agency, the Veterans Administration. Hoover's signature engraved into the history books one of the most

socially and politically transformational reorganizations of executive authority in the 20th century. The future implications of that Executive Order were not lost on Hoover, who said, "The new establishment [I create today] becomes one of the most important functions in the Government." Today, Hoover's foresight is borne out in VA's stature as the second-largest federal department after the Department of Defense. But, despite the passage of years, the waxing and waning of wars, the rise of technology, and the advent of a new century, our sacred mission has not changed:

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY VISITS

B. J. Penn, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Installations and Environment, visited North Chicago Veterans Affairs Medical Center recently. Mr. Penn was here to see the progress of the surgery and emergency department construction that is currently taking place. He was also briefed by North Chicago VA Medical Center (NCVAMC) and Naval Hospital Great Lakes (NHGL) staff regarding the planning for the ambulatory care facility that the Department of Defense (DoD) will be building at the VA.

North Chicago VA Medical Center
and Naval Hospital Great Lakes

have been working together towards this partnership for several years. Phase I was the shifting of inpatient mental health services from NHGL to NCVAMC in October 2003. Phase II is presently being worked on, which is renovating and expanding NCVAMC's surgery and emergency departments. It is a \$13 million project. Once that is completed, in June 2006 all of NHGL's inpatient medicine, including pediatrics, emergency and surgery services will shift to NCVAMC. This will be a milestone since nowhere else in the country is there such a relationship between VA & Navy. This joint partnership will mean VA & Navy personnel will be working together to provide the best quality care to veterans, as well as active duty and their dependents and military retirees. Navy and VA providers will be working along side each other, and for the first time in a VA facility, pediatric care will be provided for Navy dependents. Then Phase III of the joint



Picture: left to right – B. J. Penn, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Installations and Environment, looks on as Bonnie Casis, RN; Tessie Klumak, LPN; and Hm2 (SW) Anthony J. Valentine, Jr., Navy Corpsman, demonstrate how the pulse oximeter measures oxygen saturation of the blood and also monitors the pulse.

partnership is the construction of a new ambulatory care center co-located with NCVAMC.

Mr. Penn is responsible for formulating policy and procedures for the effective management of Navy and Marine Corps real property, housing and other facilities; environmental protection ashore and afloat; occupational health for both military and civilian personnel and timely completion of closures and realignments of installations under base closure laws.

North Chicago News

North Chicago News is published for staff and volunteers of the North Chicago VA Medical Center. Submissions can be sent to douglas.shouse@med.va.gov
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DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Hopefully, by now, all of our staff and volunteers have seen our new vision statement:

“Creating the future of federal health care through excellence in patient care, customer service, education and research.”

This vision statement is what we strive for in everything we do.

The future for us is not only serving our veteran patients, but also serving military active duty, their dependents and military retirees as we continue to move forward with planning for a federal health care system. Yes, these can be exciting times and all of us have a role in making our vision for the future a reality. Many of you are called upon to serve on task groups or committees working with staff from the Naval Hospital Great Lakes (NHGL), others provide care and services to active duty and dependents, and all of us have contact with internal and external customers, Navy and VA everyday. I appreciate and support your efforts.

As the vision statement states, we have a unique opportunity to “create

the future of federal health care” and to do something that has not been done before. Doing business as usual will no longer be the norm. We will create new ways of doing business and at the same time continue to provide quality care to a much larger beneficiary group.

Six workgroups will work on developing this new federal health care system. Members will be from NCVAMC, NHGL, and other VA and DoD officials, VA Central Office, VISN 12 and the Pentagon. These groups are:

Human Resources, Leadership, Finance/Budget, Information Management/Information Technology, Clinical and Administrative. The groups will be tasked with finding new and more efficient ways of delivering health care and looking at such issues as information management, reimbursement issues, personnel issues, etc. What these groups come up with and what we are doing locally to support and create this new federal health care system, will be the template that will be utilized in future VA/DoD ventures.

As our vision statement states, we will be creating a health care system “through excellence in patient care, customer service, education and research”. These will be our cornerstones and what we will base our new health care system on.

I know it has been demanding on all of us with this joint venture and I must tell you it will not lighten up. There is much more to do and the ship has left the port for a new destination. But let us not forget what the end result will bring, which is more services, better access to care for veterans, active duty and their dependents and military retirees, and at the same time save the federal government and us, as taxpayers, dollars.

I will continue to keep everyone informed as move forward. Again, thanks for everyone’s cooperation and efforts, it will definitely pay off in the end.



NEW LEADER OF THE GERIATRIC/NEUROLOGY TEAM



Jan Clarke, M.D. began working at this medical center in October 2004. In June, Dr. Clarke was appointed as the Leader of the Geriatric/Neurology Team. Dr. Clarke was previously employed at: Advocate Health Centers (formerly Humana Health Plans) in Chicago, from 1993 through 2004; Rush-

Presbyterian-St. Luke’s Medical Center and Johnston R. Bowman Center for the Elderly, in Chicago, from 1988 through 1993; and Mount Sinai Hospital and Medical Center, Chicago, from 1982 through 1988. She has held a variety of senior positions at these facilities, gaining a wealth of knowledge in the professional fields of internal medicine, rheumatology, and geriatric medicine/long term care. Dr. Clarke received her MD degree from Cornell University Medical College, New York, New York. She is certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine (Internal Medicine, Rheumatology, and Geriatric Medicine). Professional associations include the American College of Physician Executives; the American Geriatrics Society; Fellow, American College of Rheumatology; and the Society of Hospital Medicine. It is indeed a pleasure and privilege to have Dr. Clarke a member of our staff!

VA 75th Birthday

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it is rooted in Abraham Lincoln’s 1865 promise to “...care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan.” For seventy-five years, the Department of Veterans Affairs has been honored to provide the resourceful shoulders upon which America’s gratitude is borne for the men and women who stood resolute and unbending between liberty and tyranny. The health care bridge between the Department of Defense and the VA supports a combined system that provides our Nation’s newest veterans with state-of-the-art treatment, support throughout the course of their rehabilitation, and encouragement to help them attain their maximum level of functioning. We will meet the needs of new generations of veterans while never failing to meet the needs of our oldest veterans. We will anticipate the shape of our veteran population for the next 10, 20, and 50 years, and adjust our mission, our people, and our methods. The North Chicago VA kicked off this year-long celebration with refreshments for all in the atrium.

AMVETS

When it comes to the veterans at the North Chicago VA Medical Center, the AMVETS know no bounds. That ole' saying "Be careful what you wish for, you just might get it" is so true when the AMVETS get involved. They continually enhance the quality of care for our hospitalized patients through their kind donations and strong volunteer support.

Much enjoyment has been added for our veterans through the AMVETS generosity. Over the past two years, contributions and donations total more than \$40,000. These generous gifts have been used to build a miniature golf course and landscape the surrounding area; buy two oversized grills with accessories for cookouts and barbecues, an outdoor storage shed, and folding tables; refurbish the recreation activity kitchen with new appliances; and upgrade the sound system in the theater. In addition, the AMVETS National Service Foundation sends a monthly check in support of our veterans' ceramics program which is very successful and therapeutic. The AMVETS also took immediate action to meet the needs of our disabled veterans by donating motorized carts for use during outpatient appointments. The carts are signed out daily through the Guest Services Program and may be reserved in advance. As our veteran population continues to be challenged with mobility, the carts

are thoroughly appreciated.

Throughout the year, AMVETS actively participate in patient activities and special events for our annual patient carnival, summer picnics and cookouts, catered dinners, holiday parties, pizza parties, monthly bingos and other social events. The patients especially look forward to "Because We Care Day" in April where members visit each ward to distribute personal care kits and fresh fruit. To add an element of fun, they bring in clowns to delight the patients with smiles and humor. Routinely, volunteers drop off cakes, cookies, pastries and other goodies on the wards and pass out canteen books. The AMVETS have logged nearly 2,000 volunteer hours this year serving our veterans in Substance Abuse, the Domiciliary, Mental Health and the Nursing Home.

Dedication and commitment are familiar words to the AMVETS who are always ready to do more than is expected and continue to fulfill our wish list. We couldn't do what we do without them! The North Chicago VA Medical Center is sincerely grateful for their devotion and loyalty.

A call to action for volunteers – Please call Community Affairs, North Chicago VA Medical Center, at 224.610.3714 for volunteer opportunities.



Balmes Flower Shop in Gurnee and North Chicago donated 90 of these smiley-faced mugs filled with beautiful flowers to our veterans as part of "Make Someone Smile Week".

Chief, Community Affairs Featured in September AMVETS Issue

Kenneth List, Chief, Community Affairs will be featured on the cover of the September issue of the AMVETS Illinois state magazine followed by an exclusive article inside of the AMVETS generosity and dedication to our veteran patients at the North Chicago VA Medical Center.

Kenny became Acting Chief in September 1998 and a year later was named Chief, Community Affairs. His previous role as Assistant Chief, Recreation Therapy, had already established a warm working relationship with this very giving organization. The AMVETS charitable contributions seem to have no limits and Kenny has been very instrumental in effectively directing their donations where they are most needed. He feels very honored to be associated with such a fine group.



The American Legion Post #1084 Womens Auxiliary and the Sons of the American Legion from Roselle sponsored a huge picnic for our veterans recently and at the same time donated a beautiful pool table for our recreation activity room in building 131 (pictured).

Mark Your Calenders:

Hispanic Heritage Month September 15 through October 15

"Hispanic America: Strong and Colorful Threads in the American Fabric"

Thursday, September 22, from 11 am to 1 pm in Bldg. 134, Rm. C121

Thursday, October 6, from 1pm to 2 pm in Bldg. 4, Theater

Navy Birthday Celebration October 13



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Staff Bring Recognition to North Chicago VAMC

The front page of the Illinois Mental Health Counselors Association (July/August issue) featured an article written by Reverend William F. Vander Hayden, LCPC. We all know Reverend Vander Hayden as “Father Bill”. The article reflected the many diverse roles and inner dilemmas, and well as the many rewards, of serving as a chaplain/pastoral counselor for our veterans.

Two of our physicians, Pallavi Shah, M.D. and Axel Feller, M.D., recently had an article published in The Journal of Nutrition, Health and

Aging. The article, “Survival After Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy: The Role of Dementia”, summarized the results of their research study. Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy (PEG) is a widely used technique for enteral feeding in nursing home patients. The research study evaluated the relative impact of age, serum albumin, number of co-morbid illnesses and dementia on survival in male nursing home patients.

Sharon Pawlick, Addiction Therapist in the Domiciliary/ Substance Abuse Program, began working as a

counselor at this medical center in 1986. She has long served veterans in their quest for sobriety. Recently, her tireless efforts were acknowledged and honored by the local community. Although not affiliated with her in any way, the newest substance abuse recovery home in Waukegan has been named The Sharon Pawlick Recovery House.

A special thank you is extended to Father Bill, Dr. Shah, Dr. Feller, and Ms. Pawlick for their contributions and the positive recognition you have given this medical center.

Women’s Equality Day

The North Chicago VAMC joined the Nation in celebrating Women’s Equality Day, on August 26, 2005. This date commemorated the 85th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. To win the right to vote, women conducted a 72-year political campaign. The campaign began with the first Women’s Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848 and ended with the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920. VA recognizes the contributions of women who have served their country as veterans and the many women employed in the VA.

Flag Donated to North Chicago VA



The Deerfield American Legion Post 738 donated an American flag to the veterans in the Alcohol Addiction Rehabilitation Unit at the North Chicago VA Medical Center. The

flag is proudly posted on Bldg 11 and the veterans are very appreciative to the American Legion for helping them to be able to honor this great nation, which they served.

Pictured left to right American Legion members Joe Hoffman, Al Zelant, Jerry Vleck, and Dick Kutz.



Ashok Fulambarker, M.D., FCCP, Chief of Pulmonary Section, was an honored guest of The American College of Chest Physicians (ACCP) at a recent flag raising ceremony held at the ACCP Headquarters in Northbrook, Illinois. The flag had originally flown over the US Capital Building in honor of all of our military members both in the US and serving abroad. Dr. Fulambarker was

chosen to represent the many physicians who treat our soldiers at the VA medical facilities throughout the nation. Dr. Fulambarker proudly represented us as he joined Congressman Kirk in this ceremony.